Do Directed Motivational Current Phenomena Exist Everywhere?

An Investigation into African EFL Learners' Experiences

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Abstract

The current study investigates African college students' (ages 17-30) group-directed motivational currents (DMCs), a positive motivational aspect related to flow (Dörnyei, Henry, & Muir, 2016) in relation to their performance-based English development. The study measured the students' motivational currents as they participated in an oral, integrated and multimedia presentation project. Two DMC questionnaires were taken by 100 students before and after they participated in the project (the first questionnaire was given after they received the project instructions, the second after they completed the project but before obtaining their scores). Five focal participants wrote diaries and participated in interviews to examine whether they experienced purposefully generated currents of motivation. The 100 students responded positively to the oral presentation project at both questionnaire administration times (pre- and post-project). Significant score increases from the pre-project to post-project appeared on most motivation variables. These significant increases observed at the post-project phase could be explained by the authenticity and importance of the project and its connectedness with the learners' lives, as described by the five focal students. The results suggested that group-DMCs could be purposefully facilitated in African EFL classrooms, providing evidence for the validity of the DMC theory in an EFL context that is understudied.

Keywords: Directed motivational currents, performance-based assessment, intensive project work, motivation, emotion

1. Introduction

In francophone Africa, English language teaching and learning is dominated by rote learning. Therefore, during an assessment, high achieving learners rank at the top without being able to genuinely use English to solve real-life problems. Surprisingly, this situation is sustained by the university authorities (e.g., some deans and heads of departments) who may be directed to only rely on test scores to make administrative decisions. In my quest to find an optimal way to assess the learners—that is, to use authentic materials enabling them to practice English in real-life situations, and to increase their motivational levels while they are being assessed—I[1] initiated a performance-based assessment (PBA) project for the students to complete, specifically an integrated oral presentation on a current topic of local and national interest. PBA requires the test taker to perform the task that the test scorer wants to evaluate (Yu, 2014). It includes oral activities (oral presentations, interviews, and role-plays), alternatives in assessment (portfolios, learner journals, self-and peer-assessments), and other types of intensive project work such as school competitions.

Regarding the present study, I applied an integrated, multi-media oral presentation project built around the combination of two project frameworks (which I will review in the literature review section of this study) suggested by Dörnyei, Henry, and Muir (2016), to purposefully generate group-directed motivational currents (DMCs) in language classrooms. Overall, the project aimed to be embedded in a new instructional unit on peace, with the students using authentic materials designed by the teacher to investigate security issues and to design messages of peace and security through a multimedia-based oral presentation (peace and security is a current, national topic in Mali). Group-DMCs are exceptional motivational peaks that a group of language learners can

experience while they are working on a collaborative project (Ibrahim & Al-Hoorie, 2019; Muir, Florent, & Leach, 2020). However, the classroom-based studies by Ibrahim and Al-Hoorie and by Muir et al. that demonstrated that Dörnyei et al.'s theory (2016) on group-DMCs is true in the language classroom were conducted in classrooms in United Kingdom and Sweden, respectively. A gap in the literature is whether Group-DMCs can be generated through classroom work with learners in Africa. The current study, therefore, investigates learners' motivational responses to an integrated, multimedia, oral skills project in a West African classroom context.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Directed Motivational Currents

DMCs are exceptional motivational surges that are characterized by goal/vision-orientedness, a salient facilitative structure, positive emotionality, and generating parameters (Al-Hoorie, 2017; Dörnyei, Ibrahim, & Muir, 2015; Dörnyei, Muir, & Ibrahim, 2014; Muir & Dörnyei, 2013). A vision represents the second language (L2) learners' desired dreams, goals, and fears (Muir & Dörnyei, 2013). A vision in the case of a DMC is so vivid that learners can imagine themselves achieving their future projects (Ibrahim, 2016a). A salient facilitative structure provides a distinctive pathway that facilitates the establishment of behavioral routines to sustain the DMC ongoing intensive motivation until the achievement of the desired goal (Dörnyei et al., 2016). Positive emotionality is the enjoyment of getting closer to the end goal (Henry, Davydenko, & Dörnyei, 2015). The generating parameters are triggers for a DMC. These situations, either positive or negative, push the learners to react emotionally to achieve a significant goal (Ibrahim, 2017). In addition to the core characteristics of DMCs, the following features are used to determine the existence of DMCs (Ibrahim, 2016b; Henry et al., 2015; Zarrinabadi & Tavakoli, 2017):

- A clear starting point that marks the beginning of DMCs such as frustration, the presence of an important goal that one wants to achieve at all costs,
- Establishment and completion of routines that are noticeable by other persons and that allow the people caught up in the DMCs to achieve their subgoals conducive to final goal achievement,
- Resilience while facing difficulties to reach the desired goal,
- Obsession and absorption in the tasks related to the final goal achievement,
- Productivity out of expectations,
- Satisfaction after goal achievement.

2.1.1 Purposeful Group-Directed Motivational Current Generating Parameters

Intensive project work can trigger exceptional, shared motivational surges identical to DMCs. In this regard, I followed recommendations by Dörnyei et al. (2016, p. 177) to design an integrated and multimedia, peacemaker seminar oral presentation project that the participants of the current study worked on. The project framework is built around the assumption that learners will engage in a project if it is related to their identities and lives (Dörnyei et al., 2016). As described by Dörnyei et al., this type of project variant includes authentic, and passionate topics. Dörnyei et al. described that the Freedom Writers (LaGravanese, 2007) film and the Freedom Writers Diary (The Freedom Writers & Gruwell, 2019), the latter of which was a New York Times best seller, can be used as authentic material in a project that would adhere to this framework (which Dörnyei et al. also called the "That's Me!" framework). The students in the Freedom Writers film were low-achievers incapable of learning or getting adjusted to the school regulations. Therefore, instructing them was impossible, but when Gruwell (2019) designed a journal writing project that related the classroom course to their identities and values, the students were successful. The first reason for this success was the authenticity of the project, which gave learners a voice and a tool to tell a real audience about their identities and hopes. The highly personal topic connecting the project with learners' identities, the organic emergence of goals, and the significant role of group dynamics are the central characteristics of the task (Dörnyei et al., 2016).

Muir et al., (2020) also instructed teachers to design project work that culminates with a final showcase or presentation day that is joyful and something to which students will look forward (as described in Dörnyei et al., 2016). To reach this objective, the goal of the project must be clear with a strong vision so that learners can engage in it, and its completion requires the use of an L2 at all stages. As examples of projects reflecting this framework (also called the "All Eyes on the Final Product"), Dörnyei et al. (2016) cited making a video, creating a blog, or performing a musical concert. The key elements that guarantee a successful facilitation of a project operated under this variant are authenticity, a tangible outcome with a real audience, L2 content, clear subgoals, and positive group norms (Dörnyei et al., 2016).

2.2 Empirical Validation of Group-Directed Motivational Currents

Early theoretical and empirical articles (e.g., Dörnyei et al., 2014; Henry et al., 2015; Muir & Dörnyei, 2013) on the DMCs did not make explicitly clear how they could be used in an L2 classroom. Thus, Dörnyei et al. (2016) suggested seven project templates (p. 177) that can be applied to purposefully generate group-DMCs in the L2 classrooms, two of which are described above. In this regard, Muir et al. (2020) tested the "All Eyes on the Final Product" project template from Dörnyei et al. (2016) with 16 business English language learners and their two teachers to investigate the possibilities for facilitating group-DMCs in an L2 classroom. These participants took surveys, participated in interviews, and wrote in learning journals as they worked toward a final presentational speaking project on fundraising. The findings suggested that a group-DMC was successfully generated because of the presence of its salient features such as total absorption and exceptional productivity in the final project. The teachers also created all the conditions set by Dörnyei et al. (2016, p. 177) (authenticity, progress checks, tangible outcome, and positive group norms) to make this group project work a success. This explains why the 16 participants showed or mentioned most of the features of group-DMCs in their diaries or during the interviews.

Additionally, Ibrahim and Al-Hoorie (2019) collected data from two teachers and three students using interviews and teachers' retrospective accounts to explore the conditions that sustained group-DMCs during the students' collaborative speaking tasks, during which time they discussed a story of high interest to them. The results indicated that there were three key factors that helped set the conditions for sustaining group-DMCs: forming a group identity, attaching personal value to the work, and providing partial autonomy for each person in the group. The particularity of Ibrahim and Al-Hoorie's study is that it was concerned with learners' out of class activities (which included a fascinating topic, a cohesive group with positive norms, and a supportive teacher behavior) and the duration of the project (three days). The findings, therefore, supported the idea that a collaboratively shared DMC can occur even with short-term projects completed outside a classroom's confined walls.

2.3 The Positive Influence of PBA Project on Learning and Motivation

Assessing only language learners' knowledge such as grammar may not be conducive to evaluating progress or setting goals for further learning. Thus, learners' motivation may be negatively affected, as demonstrated by Nier, Silvio, & Malone (2014) with nine native-speaker instructors of Arabic and 13 learners of Arabic as a foreign language. The findings indicated a mismatch between the students' and their instructors' beliefs regarding the focus of teaching and assessment. The students would have been more motivated if the teachers had oriented their assessment towards real-world language situations and not grades. Contrary to Nier et al.'s (2014) results, the findings of a study by Zohoorian (2015) concluded that learners' motivational levels increased while authentic texts reflecting their needs were used to assess them. The findings indicating that authentic assessment tools (i.e., role-play cards, portfolios, oral presentations) reflecting learners' desire to communicate increased their motivational levels was supported by the results of classroom studies conducted by Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010), Fook and Sidhu (2010), and Sajedi (2014) with graduate and undergraduate students learning EFL. Other studies (e.g., Birjandi & Tamjid, 2010; Charvade, Jahandar, & Khodabandehlou, 2012; Chen, 2008; Min, 2006) examined the impact of rubrics, checklists, and reflective journal entries on EFL learners' motivation in writing classes. The findings indicated that these tools transform writing into moments of pleasure, confidence, and interaction.

To demonstrate that PBA in the form of a DMC oral presentation project can facilitate the purposeful manifestation of group-DMCs in an African English-language-learning context as well, the following research questions are posed:

1. What are university EFL students' motivational and emotional responses to a PBA, specifically an integrated, multimedia oral presentation project done in small groups?

2. Are there any differences across time in motivation (as measured via a questionnaire), i.e., before and after the oral presentation project?

3. Methods

3.1 Language Teaching Context

This study of 100 participants was based on first-year English classes, one at Vocational Teacher's Training School, and one at Higher School of Journalism and Communication Science. At these colleges, English is a required subject during students' first three years. The classes shared the same syllabus and were taught by the same teacher (the first author). However, the students began their English instruction in the public schools in 7th grade (at the age of 12 or 13). They were all non-English majors. Each semester they take approximately 45 hours of English instruction. The first-year classes focus on the four skills, and instructors have leeway in designing the class

content.

3.2 Description of the Multi-media, Integrated Oral Presentation Project

The participants of the current study worked on an eight-week multi-media, integrated oral presentation project called the "peacemakers' seminar" in groups of 4 or 5. They designed peace messages and led a discussion in English suggesting solutions to the Malian security crises. These learners were not involved in the national debates that were organized to promote peace. Therefore, the project instructed them on this topic through readings and videos, and then gave them a voice and a tool to talk about an issue that is normally managed by the politicians and conflict management experts. After introductory lessons during week one, each week for seven weeks, learners were given one hour to work on their project in class in small groups. They were able to choose a specific topic that they wanted to present in relation to the larger theme of national security: There were 20 from which to choose. The 20 national security topics are in the Supplemental file's Appendix S3 (Koné, 2023). They also had conferences with me, the teacher, to solve the project-related difficulties or to receive my feedback on their ongoing work. During the project's final presentations in weeks nine and ten, learners were encouraged to use media such as PowerPoint, posters, and videos. They were given 30 minutes to present, plus 15 minutes for a series of questions and answers, resulting in a final integrated, multimedia presentation and question-and-answer session of 45 minutes in length per group. They were graded on the observation rubric that appears in the Supplemental file's Appendix S4 (Koné, 2023).

3.3 Participants

As noted above, the data were collected from 100 participants who were all studying EFL at two colleges. Both are public universities located in Bamako, Mali. The convenience sample was composed of 66 male and 34 female students: They were intact classes I taught. Their mean age was 19.58, ranging from 17 to 30. Their proficiency levels were approximately low B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) scale (n = 70; score range from 33 to 48) or approximately high B1 or low B2 on the scale (n = 30; range from 49 to 70), as based on an adapted practice paper-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (a practice test that included listening, reading, and writing) that I administered to them. These students are also called high-beginner and intermediate in terms of proficiency within their institutions.

3.3.1 Focal Participants

As all the groups (23 in total) of 4 to 5 students volunteered to be the focal participants, one group was chosen at random. They were given pseudonyms, as shown in Table 1. The group chose the *Tuareg Rebellion* as the topic of their peacemakers' seminar oral presentation project. The Tuareg Rebellion is among the factors that contributed to the instability in Mali.

Table 1. Focal Participants' Description

Pseudonyms	Age	Gender	Practice TOEFL Scores	Proficiency Levels
Aicha	18	Female	70	Intermediate (high B1 or low B2)
Fatou	20	Female	48	High beginner (low B1)
Ilias	18	Male	70	Intermediate (high B1 or low B2)
Mohamed	18	Male	68	Intermediate (high B1 or low B2)
Paul	19	Male	58	High beginner (low B1)

Participation in this study was voluntary and participants could stop their participation in the study at any time without any penalties. Their consent was obtained before they completed the questionnaires. Learner diaries were also used after obtaining the participants' consent. I also guaranteed anonymity by using pseudonyms. Their rights were respected based on the laws regulating participants' rights in Mali. The study was further approved by the administrations of the Vocational Teacher's Training School and the Higher School of Journalism and Science of Communication.

3.4 Methodology and Data Collection Instruments

I designed this research as a sequential mixed-method research study (Riazi & Candlin, 2014), in which my quantitative data were collected first, followed by focal group, diary, and interview data at second stage, with the two being mutually dependent. I also gave concurrent, open-ended questions within the Likert-scale questionnaire

at stage 1 (during the quantitative data collection phases), which allowed me to investigate details on the students' thoughts close to the times the Likert-scale responses were given. As described by Creswell (2022), this mixed-method approach, which combines statistical trends with "stories and personal experiences" (p. 2) helps obtain a better and richer answer to the research questions.

3.4.1 Motivation Questionnaires

For the construct of motivation, the pre-and post-project questionnaire sub-variables included: project attraction/enjoyment, effort expectation/reported effort, and success expectation/result (success) assessment. For example, as shown in the Supplemental file (Appendix S1) (Koné, 2023), on the pre-project questionnaire, students were asked, "How well do you expect to do on this oral presentation project?" and then on the post-project questionnaire, they were asked, "How well did you do on this oral presentation project?" These questions were measuring their effort expectation and reported effort. A feeling of ease, worry, nervousness, and confidence represented the sub-variable of emotional state, which is an integral part of the variable of motivation based on Dörnyei (2014). It was measured both times. The sub-variables measuring the variables of motivation and emotion were adapted from Poupore (2013). Two questions were about the level of difficulty and challenge associated with the completion of the project because task-related difficulty and challenge may impact positively or negatively L2 learners' motivation while achieving the task. The questionnaires are in the Supplemental file's Appendix S1 (Koné, 2023).

3.4.2 Student Diaries

Diary writing allows learners to talk about their feelings, attitudes, and other affective variables while learning an L2 (Genesee & Upshur, 1996; Quirke, 2001; Zhao, 2011). The focal participants made entries about each step of their oral presentation project once a week for eight weeks after the course at home. I gave them instructions allowing them to write about their motivation, emotions, how they worked together as a group, what they really liked or disliked in the project, and other miscellaneous aspects that they would like to share. A copy of this project's diary template is in the Supplemental file's Appendix S2 (Koné, 2023).

3.4.3 In-person Interviews

I interviewed the five focal participants who were selected for the diary writing. They were interviewed after the course for the eight weeks starting from the second week of project work. The interviews were done in English, and they lasted from 10 to 15 minutes depending on their willingness to communicate. The interview questions can be found in Appendix S6 in the Supplemental file (Koné, 2023).

3.4.4 Data Collection Processes

A pilot study was conducted with 10 participants before the targeted participants completed the questionnaires. They were taught by another teacher who administered the questionnaire to them. These participants were given 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. However, at the end of the pilot study, some slight modifications related to time (30 minutes instead of 20) and explanations of the various parts of the questionnaires were recommended. Group administration was used to ensure that all the targeted participants would complete the questionnaire. They completed the pre-project motivation questionnaire just before they started working on their oral presentation project, i.e., after the project was explained to them. The five focal participants wrote their diaries and were interviewed between the pre- and post-questionnaires.

3.5 Data Analysis

I used SPSS 23 software to analyze the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics in the form of means and standard deviation were used to calculate the scores of the motivational and emotional variables. Concerning the variation across time, i.e., pre-project versus post-project, inferential statistics in the form of paired samples t-tests were used to measure the differences. An effect size statistic, specifically eta squared, was also calculated to determine the magnitude of the differences in the means. While interpreting the value of eta squared, .01 was a small effect size, .06 a moderate effect size, and .14 a large effect size.

Regarding the qualitative data, an analysis based on the number of references of the patterns identified in the data was done. This way of analyzing the qualitative data has been influenced by Dörnyei and Tagushi (2010). They explained that an interpretation based on the number of references of the features can allow a researcher to reliably report and interpret what the participants said like in these sample comments:
"I like work in group because it helps me to be in the topic."
"I like group work because my group can teach me new things that I don't know."
As a result, the group work as an enjoyment or liking aspect would be counted as two. All the responses were considered to determine the patterns, but only one sample comment was chosen as illustration for each feature.

This decision has been motivated by the clarity and the relevance of the comments.

Regarding the qualitative data collected with the student diaries and interviews, I used thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017) to have insight to the factors that facilitated the purposeful generation of DMCs and also other features that characterize them such as feeling an intense sense of productivity or achievement, a powerful sense of focus and of being absorbed, generating important levels of energy or effort, a proper challenge-skill balance, and a sense that they were very highly motivated during the whole duration of the project. These features are used to determine the existence of DMCs based on prior work (Ibrahim & Al-Hoorie, 2019; Muir et al., 2020). The qualitative diary and interview data from this research are published in the Supplemental file with identifiers removed: They are in the Supplement's Appendix S5 and S6, respectively (Koné, 2023).

I also used SPSS 23 software to conduct an item reliability analysis to determine the internal consistency of the items and surveys expressed by Cronbach alpha coefficient. Dörnyei and Tagushi (2010) explained that an optimal reliability coefficient should exceed 0.70 even with short scales containing three or four items. Therefore, the items contained in these questionnaires were measuring the construct of motivation and affective variables both before and after the project as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Item Reliability Analysis for Pre-and Post- Project Motivation and Emotional Variables

Variables	Cronbach alpha Coefficient	
	Pre-project	Post-project
Motivation (6 items)	.90	.80
Emotion (4 items)	.80	.80

4. Results

4.1 Motivational Responses

After analyzing the data collected from the 100 participants based on a five-point Likert scale with 5 as the highest point and 1 as the lowest point, the results showed that the participants were highly motivated to carry out the peacemakers' seminar oral presentation project at both stages, as illustrated in the mean scores displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Motivational Responses to the Peacemakers' Seminar Oral Presentation Project

Variables	Pre-Project		Post-Project		Pre/Post difference		Sig. at p< .05	
	M	SD	M	SD		$t(99)$	p	eta^2
Attraction / Enjoyment	4.20	0.65	4.56	0.68	-0.36	-4.85	<.001	.19
Effort Expectation / Reported Effort	4.17	0.69	4.60	0.50	-0.43	-5.43	<.001	.22
Success Expectation / Result Assessment	3.92	0.82	3.92	0.82	0.00	NS		
Total Motivation	4.10	0.63	4.36	0.40	-0.26	-5.70	<.001	.24

N = 100; results based on a five-point Likert scale; NS (Non-Significant result)

4.1.1 Project Challenge Skill-Balance and Difficulty at Pre- and Post-Project Levels

The 100 participants viewed the project to be slightly difficult, and they believed that their skills allowed them to handle the challenge related to its achievement. This belief significantly increased at the post-project phase, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Peacemakers' Seminar Oral Presentation Project Difficulty and Challenge

Variables	Pre-Project		Post-Project		Pre/Post difference	Sig. at *p< .05*		
	M	SD	M	SD		*t*(99)	*p*	eta²
Project Difficulty	2.78	0.91	2.19	0.89	0.59	4.17	<.001	.14
Challenge-Skill Balance	3.96	0.85	4.69	0.63	-0.73	-6.69	<.001	.31

N = 100; results based on a five-point Likert scale

4.2 Emotional Variables at Pre- and Post-Project Levels

The emotional mean scores indicated that several participants were at ease, less nervous and worried, and more confident at both stages. This positive emotional state increased significantly after carrying out their project, as described in Table 5.

Table 5. Emotional Responses to the Peacemakers' Seminar Oral Presentation Project

Variable	Pre-Project		Post-Project		Pre/Post difference	Sig. at *p< .05*		
	M	SD	M	SD		*t(99)*	*p*	eta²
Emotional State	3.73	0.83	4.30	0.52	-0.57	-5.62	<.001	.24

N = 100; results based on a five-point Likert scale

4.3 Open-Ended Question Responses at Pre-and Post-Project Stages

One sample comment relevant for understanding the participants' choices was displayed for each feature, as shown in Table 6. The number in the parentheses refers to the number of times that they have mentioned directly or indirectly the given feature.

Table 6. Open-Ended Questions Responses

	Pre-Project Motivation Questionnaire	
Questions	Features and Frequency	Student Sample Comments
1. What are some of the reasons why you feel nervous before starting this oral presentation project?	Anxiety related to speaking in public (7)	"I'm nervous … because oral is difficult for me and my pronunciation is not good."
	Group members' attitudes (4)	"My group members do not like working hard and they will laugh to the others even if it is forbidden by the class."
	Workload (2)	"This project is a lot work and it will take all my time at home so I feel nervous."
	Non-familiarity with project work (2)	"Madam explains the project things well but she does not teach us like the other teachers. We must do all the work."
	Connectedness of the project with learners' personal life (37)	"I am not nervous because I am a Malian and I want to show in this project that united we stand."
2. What are some of the reasons why you do not	Goal-orientedness (18)	"I 'm not nervous because I want to demonstrate my competence in this oral presentation and I want to progress in English."

feel nervous before starting this oral presentation project?	Experience with speaking activities (7)	"I'm not nervous because I did a presentation about drug addiction in front of all my classmates and I was not nervous and my presentation was excellent. So I'm ready for this presentation and I will make it better."
3. Why do you think you will do well on this oral presentation project?	Significance of the project in the learners' lives (30)	"This project is crucial for me and I must contribute to the peace in Mali."
	Teacher support (14)	"... because the teacher will give us advice before we present."
	Project clear goals (14)	"The project is clear and we have details of the different parts and the final is a peace seminar to bring peace in Mali."
	Competence (28)	"Because I believe in myself and my competences permit me to do it well."
4. Why do you think you will not do well on this oral presentation project?	Non-familiarity with speaking activities (6)	"I will not do well because I don't have possibility to speak in English all the time and I am not used to do presentation so I'm worried in front of my class."
	Limited vocabulary (4)	"I don't know a lot of words in English. So I can't speak well in oral presentation."
	Group peers' negative influence (4)	"I will not do well because my group members hesitate a lot between topics and we will fight for a topic."
Post-Project Motivation Questionnaire		
1. What are some of the reasons why you feel nervous after doing this oral presentation project?	Dissatisfaction with low performance (3)	"Because I am not satisfied of my presentation. I was nervous and I did not look at the class."
	Group peers' performance (4)	"... They were afraid to talk in front of the class and they destroyed a presentation that we had prepared very well together."
	Anxiety related to speaking in public (5)	"I feel nervous because I was a little afraid to present our topic in front of many people."
2. What are some of the reasons why you do not feel nervous after doing this oral presentation project?	Satisfaction with high performance (52)	"I prepared my presentation carefully and I put all the obligatory parts in my presentation. I attained all the objectives of this seminar and I'm happy of my presentation."
	Group Cohesiveness (18)	"I was about to be confuse [confused] but my group help and I continue doing my part. So I am not nervous."
	Confidence (18)	"I'm satisfied of my presentation and I'm confident because I'm sure my group will obtain a very good grade so no worry."
3. Why do you think you did well on this oral presentation project?	Knowledge of the topic (38)	"I mastered our topic and I was happy to do it."
	Preparation (30)	"Because I prepared well this presentation and I made a lot of research about our topic."
	Group performance (20)	"I did well because my group was natural and we involved the class and our group leader insisted on the use of English. We did not read, there were good transitions."
4. Why do you think you did not do well on	Speaking fluently in front of the class (5)	"In this presentation I think that I didn't do well because I could not speak clearly in front of the class. My voice trembled a lot."

this oral presentation project?	Non-familiarity with speaking activities (7)	"I'm not accustomed to oral presentation and it was difficult for me to take the floor. But the teacher encouraged me and she said that I don't need to be perfect."
5. What aspects of this project did you like and why?	Topic and its connectedness with learners' personal life (36)	"The different topics are about the problems of Mali and I'm part of Mali so I must bring my contribution. I'm conscious of our problem and we need peace. I like this topic too much because it gives me some value."
	Authenticity (33)	"It was very necessary to do this presentation because it permitted us to speak like in a real conference and express ourselves in front of people."
	Project benefits to English learning (18)	"The project permitted me to obtain many new vocabularies."
	Group positive influence (12)	"I like the topic and I also like when we speak in English between group friends. My group helps me to learn and practice."
	Challenge (1)	"I am a hard worker and I like to work with challenge and to be under pressure."
6. What aspects of this project didn't you like and why?	Group members' negative attitude (7)	"Some group members were not correct. They did not come on time for the preparations at home."
	Learner-centered approach (5)	"I like the project but I didn't like when she did not give us lessons about our topic. We searched information in the library and online. I think that the teacher must give everything."
	Time (2)	"We worked together, but the time was very short and we could not explain all our research and I did not like that but in general we were pleased."
7. What aspects of this project were difficult to achieve and why?	Speaking accurately and fluently in front of the class (11)	"Personally, I am afraid of doing mistakes when I speak English in front of the class."
	Group maturity (7)	"To present by group, there may be disagreement on the choice of topic and leader of the group and we lost four weeks before we choose one definite topic."
	Time (2)	"To be in time was difficult to achieve because our topic was so important and we were obliged to do quick somehow."

5. Discussion

5.1 Motivational Responses

The results indicated that the participants were highly motivated to carry out their oral presentation project at both stages as seen in the mean scores of their total motivation: pre-project stage (M = 4.10, SD = .63) and post-project stage (M = 4.36, SD = .40). These findings concur with Aliakbari and Jamalvandi's (2010) results showing that oral activities increased EFL learners' motivation. The participants' intense motivation at both stages was fueled by the topic of the project, the authenticity, the teacher's scaffolding, and the balanced level of difficulty, as revaled in the participants' sample comments. These features, including the self-concordant aspect are in many ways markers of a DMC based on Dörnyei et al. (2016). For example, the participants recognized that a strong connection existed between the project's topic and their personal life. Their skills also allowed them to handle the level of difficulty and challenge, which may, additionally, justify why they were highly motivated.

The high authenticity that characterizes the peacemakers' oral presentation project along with the teacher's scaffolding before and during the project might also cause the learners' motivation to fluctuate. For example, the

classroom discussed the rules regulating the groups and the various elements contained in the project during the preparatory stage. Most of the obstacles that could block the successful completion of the project were also addressed during the various conferences with the teacher. Regarding a DMC, this step is called progress check, a significant element in the facilitative structure. Muir and Dörnyei (2013) explained that the progress checks allowed the person caught up in the motivational flow to continue achieving their goals. This was confirmed by the results of the present study.

Learners' high motivation at both stages of the project could further be justified by the cohesiveness of their groups. Due to these positive group dynamics, the classroom atmosphere was suitable for small group work. However, the participants whose groups were not cohesive with positive norms revealed that they would not perform well because of their group peers' negative attitudes. This finding showing that group peers' attitudes can positively or negatively affect learners' motivation, and then their performance, is supported by Chang's (2010) results suggesting that members of cohesive groups with positive norms commented highly on their motivational levels. However, the variables of success expectation/result assessment showed no statistically significant difference at the post-project level. This may be attributed to the participants' cultural background that encourages them to remain humble while appreciating their own performance. Additionally, they were not familiar with evaluating their performance.

5.2 Emotional Responses

The teacher provided the participants with quality feedback that may have played a significant role in maintaining their emotional state at a relative stable, positive level as shown in the total mean score of their emotional feeling before the project (M = 3.73, SD = .83) and after the project (M = 4.30, SD = .52). Learners' self-confidence despite the slight difficulty and challenge might also push down their levels of anxiety, worry, and nervousness. Despite this intense motivation and a relative stable emotional feeling observed at pre-and post-project levels, 12 learners were anxious about their performance. This negative emotional feeling was caused by the group non-cohesiveness, anxiety about speaking, and non-familiarity with project work. Some learners might also have difficulty adjusting to a new teaching approach because of their individual learning differences despite the teacher's quality feedback on their ongoing work. Regarding the level of anxiety, one project may not be sufficient for some students to feel at ease, and language learning anxiety may not be harmful if it does not become a habit. An optimal level of anxiety may even stimulate a higher motivation and dissipate after a while.

Interestingly, the 12 participants did not reveal that their negative feeling affected their overall motivation to complete the project. The qualitative data also indicated that learners were fully engaged in the project because it aligned with their personal lives and identities. This may suggest that the larger group of participants' group-DMCs were successfully facilitated. They further explain why the subjects' emotional feeling was *stable* in the eighth week. These positive emotions also prove that the teacher's scaffolding before and during the project work was successful. However, a teacher should be cautious not to deprive learners of the project ownership.

5.3 Findings and Discussion Related to the Focal Participants' Qualitative Data

Data were collected from the focal participants to examine the factors that supported the purposeful facilitation of group-DMCs. The findings suggested a cohesive group with positive norms, a fascinating, authentic topic, and pleasure as conditions that facilitated the focal participants' group-DMCs. The group-DMCs were launched after a three-week project work marked by negotiation and collaboration, as revealed by this participant: "We really started to function in the third week." The positive progress checks also pushed up learners' motivational levels at their highest peak, as described by Paul "... I am like a horse." Another generating factor was the topic of the oral presentation project. Peacemakers' seminar was part of the learners' present life, but they were not concerned with the official debates. Therefore, the project gave them a voice, as confirmed by Mohamed while talking about the enjoyment or liking aspects of the project:

> *I like our topic and we will work on it with all our energy. This rebellion and terrorism are a problem for everybody and I think that young guys are more threatened by jihadists. The topic also permits me to tell my class comrades that I love all Malians and that united we stand. This problem is not only for politicians. It is not politic, but it is social problem.* (Mohamed)

In addition to having a voice, these focal participants found that the project was authentic compared with the other tasks (e.g., traditional multiple-choice based assessment), which required them only to recall what they had learnt. According to Ilias, the project initiated them in real-life work: "I like that the project is real. We work like experts. We interview people like a journalist and present a peace message like in TV." These findings are consistent with the results of the large group of participants who also claimed that the project's topic had a strong connection with their values and identities. Importantly, Dörnyei et al. (2016) further listed an attractive topic among the situations

that can facilitate a group-DMC.

Furthermore, the cohesiveness of the group provided learners with a friendly atmosphere enabling them to surpass themselves:

> *We are really ensemble [together]. It is something unusual and excellent. Day after day my group is stronger. We work all for the group and we are engaged to do the best*   *peace*   *message*   *and presentation. Nothing can stop us now except God.* (Fatou)

Consistent with the results of Ibrahim and Al-Hoorie (2019), the findings of the present study support that "the development of a strong dynamic is a critical base component when considering the purposeful facilitation of a group DMC in educational contexts" (Muir, 2016, p. 228). When this positive dynamic is not maintained, the collaboration between learners may be impacted negatively and they may lack sufficient energy to establish routines facilitating the collective goal achievement. On the other hand, a cohesive group with appropriate norms can fuel a safe group-DMC departure for all its members, including the weakest ones who will try to surpass themselves to become legitimate members. This struggle for belonging to a group was reflected in Fatou's effort investment to help her group. For example, she read additional books to have an acceptable level. Additionally, the finding explains why the participants began experiencing purposefully facilitated group-DMC after the three-week project work. This length of period allowed the group to germinate and become strong to function autonomously.

Another salient marker of DMC that was found was pleasure. Although the fulfillment of the different tasks included in a project may not be pleasant, being closer to a valued end-goal makes it unique (Ibrahim, 2016a). The five informants recognized that the beginning was difficult, but when they noticed that they were on a good path to achieve the goals set for their project, they enjoyed what they were doing, as revealed by Aicha, "I am at the top. I am really satisfied of my group work and I think that we will do something that is excellent and new." As they were satisfied with group and individual performance, the participants (Ilias, Mohamed, and Aicha) commonly considered their motivation to be unique as described in the comments: "I live something new and extraordinary," "my motivation is at its paroxysm, and it is magic," and "I continued working harder and harder."

In conclusion, the findings indicated that most of the salient features of DMCs such as feeling an intense sense of productivity or achievement, an extraordinarily intense sense of focus and of being absorbed, generating important levels of energy or effort, a proper challenge-skill balance, and a sense that the participants were very highly motivated during the whole duration of the project were found in the data. These DMC markers are further evidence that a group-DMC can be purposefully facilitated in an EFL classroom. The frameworks set by Dörnyei et al. (2016), specifically the That is Me! variant as optimal conditions to trigger a group-DMC, are also applicable in the EFL classrooms based on the results of this study.

6. Conclusion

The present study operated from a DMC perspective and examined the impact of PBA on EFL learners' motivation. The results and their discussion showed that the 100 participants were highly motivated to complete the project at both levels, i.e., before the project (M = 4.10, SD = .63) and after the project (M = 4.26, SD = .40). As shown in the post-project mean score, the learners' motivation was higher compared with that of the pre-project level. This increase may correlate with a positive emotional state as displayed in the emotional mean score (M = 4.30, SD = .52) at the post-project level. However, the participants were slightly anxious and nervous before they started working on their project (M = 3.73, SD = .83), but this slight emotional fluctuation did not interfere with their overall performance or motivation. As zero anxiety is difficult to achieve, this slight increase at pre-project level can be a marker of interest in the project. It can also be explained by how much the learners were determined to carry out the project.

The current study study further explored the purposefully facilitation of group-DMCs with the That's Me! framework variant. This was based on Dörnyei et al.'s (2016) hypothesis suggesting that intensive project work can help L2 learners experience deliberately induced classroom group-DMCs. The findings indicated that the focal group composed of five students experienced purposefully facilitated group-DMCs. Their DMC experiences were launched successfully after three weeks of intensive project work. Most of the markers of DMC experiences in general and group-DMCs were found in the data. The behavioral routines established during the intense group work were maintained until the end of the project. In their diary entries and during the interviews, the participants described some of the factors (e.g., clear, and specific collective goals, cohesive groups, teacher's support, confidence, and an attractive topic connected with their personal life) that positively influenced their motivation and pushed them to produce beyond their own expectations. These factors were also used by the larger group of participants to explain their high performance and positive emotionality. In conclusion, EFL learners can experience purposefully generated group-DMCs, and DMC theory is also applicable in the EFL classrooms in

Africa where English may not be broadly spoken outside the classrooms. However, the current study has some limitations in relation to the questionnaires as data collection instruments because the participants may have just reported what the researcher might have wanted to see. To mitigate this bias, it was clearly explained that there were no good or bad responses. Additionally, in-person interviews were used with the five focal participants.

There are pedagogical implications from this study that should be pointed out here. Based on the results of the current study, EFL teachers can apply motivational teaching practices in combination with intensive project work, as described by Alrabai (2014), Dörnyei (2014, p. 524), and Dörnyei et al. (2016) to transform an assessment into a profitable learning experience, and then to stimulate group-DMCs. The participants of the present study mentioned most of the components (i.e., cohesive groups, increasing the learners' goal-orientedness, enhancing the learners' related-L2 values and attitudes, positive feedback, and promoting cooperation between learners) of these motivational teaching practices as factors influencing their motivation to fluctuate and reach an exceptional level. In short, applying these practices in an EFL context can transform some learners into motivated language learners, a phrase that is used to refer to the successful language learners who can achieve at a higher level. However, applying these techniques may be challenging in a teacher's busy schedule, but sharing the responsibilities of an assessment with the learners can minimize a teacher's workload, and give a certain autonomy and responsibility to the students.

Note

I[1]: First person is used in this study to refer to the work of the first author, who conducted the research in her home country. The second author provided editing and proofreading.

Acknowledgments

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